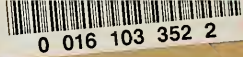


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Little Helpers

BY

BY LOUISE FALLENSTEIN GAUSS

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LITTLE HELPERS

A Play in One Act

BY LOUISE FALLENSTEIN GAUSS

SCENE

A simple living room with a fireplace before which a single pair of large stockings is hung. The fireplace may be a mere representation, a picture painted on a screen; or may be easily made with red paper and an electric light.

CHARACTERS

TED, a boy with a clear strong voice, and good enunciation.

REINDEER, a group of very small children.

OVERALL BOYS, a group of small boys.

LITTLE MOTHERS, a group of small girls.

THE WINDS
and
THE STARS } groups of slightly older children.

COMRADES, boys of Ted's own age.

The above groups should not be so large as to crowd the stage and prevent free movement; otherwise the number of children taking part in this play is unlimited.

The same group may play both **Overall Boys** and **Boy Comrades**, if desired.

In order to make the songs easy for all, transpose the music into the keys indicated. Voices behind the scenes may help the singers on the stage; but this should be done with judgment, as too much help would spoil the effect.

LITTLE HELPERS

(Curtain rises. Discovers Ted lying flat on the floor, looking at the fire, his head resting on his hands and elbows.)

Ted. I'm expecting to get some nice presents tonight. See those big stockings hanging by the fire? (He gets up, and examines the stockings; then walks impatiently to and fro.) I wish the things would hurry up and come, though. I'm getting just a little bit tired waiting for them. Listen!

(Song "Jingle Bells" is heard softly behind scenes. Ted listens.)

Verse. Dashing thro' the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh;
O'er the fields we go,
Laughing all the way;
Bells on bob-tail ring,
Making spirits bright;
What fun it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song to-night!

(At chorus, enter **Reindeer** decorated with sleigh bells, and harnessed together, tandem fashion, with long strips of red cloth which terminate in reins. A boy driver holds the reins and a whip. Singing the chorus, they enter trotting, and trot around stage.)

Chorus. Jingle, Bells! Jingle, bells!
Jingle all the way!
Oh! what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh!

Ted. (When chorus is ended). Are you waiting for your stockings to get filled up, too?

Reindeer. (In chorus). No; we're playing Santa Claus and his Reindeer.

Ted. Maybe, then, you'll come and play with me. I'm so lonesome.

Reindeer. We haven't time tonight, thank you. We have to fill Auntie's stocking.

First Reindeer. (Girl). I'm going to put in one of my dollies, cause Auntie says she loves my dollies.

Second Reindeer. (Boy). I'm going to put in—you won't tell anybody—Auntie gave me five cents to buy chocolates. I won't eat them all. I'm going to put some in Auntie's stocking.

Third Reindeer. (Girl). I'm going to put in some holly with nice red berries.

Fourth Reindeer. (Boy). I'm going to put in Topsy; that's one of our kittens. We've got three; and it will just go in the stocking.

Ted. My! I feel sorry for YOU, having to give away all those nice presents.

Chorus of Reindeer. Why, we love to give. Jesus said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Driver of Reindeer. We must be going, now, to fill Auntie's stocking. Get up.

(**Reindeer** drops to hands and knees, trot around stage, singing verse of "Jingle Bells." Exit at Chorus, and finish behind scenes,—music getting softer and bells fainter.)

Ted. They seem to be having a nic time, I almost wish I could go with them. But here comes someone to keep me company. (Claps hands.) The Overall Boys!

(Enter Overall Boys to March time—any March. They wear big hats and overalls and carry spades over their shoulders. These spades may be made by tacking squares of cardboard on the ends of smooth sticks. After all are in place before the audience, they make the motion of digging with their spades on first beat of each measure of music.)

Ted. Well, I'm certainly glad to see you. I suppose you're as tired waiting for the stockings to be filled as I am.

First Overall Boy. Yes, we are a little bit tired. You see, we've been working pretty hard filling the stockings.

Ted, (derisively). YOU fill stockings! You FILL stockings! You couldn't fill stockings, you're too little.

Second Overall Boy. Say, do you read story-books?

Ted. Of course I do. I'm expecting to get a big beauty as one of my presents this Christmas.

Second Boy. Good! WE made it.

Ted. YOU made it!

Second Boy. Of course. We make half the story-books in the world. Did you never hear of an Overall Boy story-book?

Chorus. (Said).

Who says the Overall Boys
Don't help in the Christmas joys,
Had best take a look
In that new story-book,
And find us—the Overall Boys.

Ted. I'm just going to GET presents, this Christmas. I'm not making anything for anybody.

Third Boy. That's too bad, for it's really nicer to give presents than to get them.

Fourth Boy. I thought boys that went to Sunday School and knew about Jesus always gave presents at Christmas time.

Ted. No, they don't,—ALWAYS.

Fifth Boy. It's too bad you're not an Overall Boy, for we'd take you along with us. You'd like it. But I suppose now we'll have to be going.

First Boy. One, two, three—ready—jump! (They jump.)

Ted. What ARE you doing now?

Chorus. We're jumping into the story-book.

(Exit, to March music. Ted sits on stage in dejected attitude. Enter **Little Mothers** with dolls. They come softly to introductory bars (repeated until ready to sing) of "The Slumber Boat," by Jessie L. Gaynor. Standing in semi-circle they sing as they rock dolls to sleep.)

Little Mothers. (Sing).

Baby's boat's the silver moon,
Sailing in the sky,
Sailing o'er the sea of sleep,
While the clouds float by.
Sail, baby sail,
Out upon that sea
Only don't forget to sail
Back again to me.

Ted. Say!

Little Mothers, (in chorus). Sh!

(They continue to sing.)

Baby's fishing for a dream,
Fishing near and far,
His line a silver moonbeam is,
His bait a silver star.
Sail, baby sail,
Out upon that sea
Only don't forget to sail
Back again to me.

Ted, (tiptoeing up). Are they asleep now? Did you get them as Christmas presents?

Chorus. No, no, we're going to GIVE them as Christmas presents, to some poor little girls.

Ted. Everybody seems to be giving something but me. I'm not giving a single present to anybody.

First Little Mother. Oh, how CAN you keep from it?

Second Little Mother. Have you heard about the little baby Jesus? He was God's first Christmas present to the world.

Third Little Mother. When I think of the present God gave us, I just have to give something too.

(They sing the lullaby again, and go out to the music of it.)

Ted. It isn't that I don't want to give anything. It's just that I have nothing to give.

(Enter the Wind children, with strips of pale yellow and blue tissue paper pasted to and fluttering from their fingers and arms.)

First Wind. *Who has seen the Wind?

(Poem by Christina Rossetti.)

(*Pronounce with short i as in window, not with long i sometimes used in poetry.)

Winds, (in chorus). Neither I nor you;
But when the clouds hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

First Wind. Who has seen the wind?

Winds, (in chorus). Neither you nor I;
But when the trees bow down their heads,
(bow heads)

The wind is passing by.

Ted. Who are you?

Chorus, (fluttering arms). The wind, the wind!

Ted, (turning up coat collar). Well, you ARE a little chilly, but I think I like you. You seem so happy.

Chorus. We are happy. We've been helping, helping, helping.

Second Wind. I blew over a snowbank so that a man could get by with his arms full of packages. I got behind the bank, and I went like this. (Puffs out cheeks and shakes arms.)

Third Wind. And I threw sand in a baby's eyes so he would go to sleep and let his mamma finish all the pretty presents she was making to give away.

Fourth Wind. I've been singing Christmas carols. I tried to sing them as the angels did so long ago; that night above the Baby in the manger.

Chorus. Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem;
Hark! the herald-angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

(As the Winds sing this verse—in key of F, not G—the Stars singing the same, enter quietly, and take their places around the stage.)

Ted. Dear little Stars, you too have been helping with Christmas, I know. Your faces are so happy.

Chorus of Stars. Yes, as much as we could, Ted. We've been shining and making the world bright.

Ted. I wish I could find something to do for somebody. Tell me, Stars, have you seen with your bright eyes, something a boy like me could do?

Chorus. Let's see. (They bow their heads in thought.)

First Star. I'm afraid I haven't, Ted.

Second Star. It keeps us busy finding things for ourselves to do, you see.

Third Star. Your eyes are bright enough. Why don't you look around for yourself?

Chorus of Winds and Stars, (all pointing at Ted.)

With eyes as bright as you—as you—
You'll find some things to do—to do.

(Exit Stars and Winds, still pointing at Ted, and walking backwards, repeating the words "to do—to do" until all are off the stage. Then unexpectedly one of the Stars pokes in his head and says saucily, "You'll find some things to do." Enter immediately, from other side of stage, if possible, **Boy Comrades**. They wear coats and caps; and First Boy carries a large basket on his arm.)

Comrades, (in chorus). Hello! Ted.

First Boy. Do you want to help with a donation?

Ted. Help? Well, I just guess I do. I've been wanting to help at something. But—but what's a donation?



Second Boy. It's about the nicest thing you ever

Third Boy. It has doughnuts in it.

Fourth Boy. And chicken-pie!

Fifth Boy. And cranberry sauce!

Sixth Boy. And cake and candy and oranges and plum pudding.

First Boy. The donation, Ted, is this big basket chuck full of goodies for Grandma Larkin, the lady that lives in the old house on the corner. They say she is very poor—hasn't had a really good meal this winter.

Ted. Of course I want to help. I can't tell you how much I want to; but I don't believe I've got anything to put in—unless—say, how would she like a pair of nice, warm stockings. (Runs eagerly to fireplace and takes them down.) I got big ones to hang, so they'd hold all I wanted.

Chorus. Just the thing!

First Boy, (setting down basket). They're big enough to fit her. Put 'em right in here, Ted.

Third Boy, (as stockings are put in). Lookout for those doughnuts!

Fourth Boy. Don't stick 'em into the chicken-pie.

First Bay, (rising). Now for Grandma Larkin's. Give us a lift here, Ted.

Ted, (stepping to front of stage). If anyone should come while I'm away with a present for me, you tell 'em Grandma Larkin needs things a lot worse than I do.

(Exit all, and Curtain. Or, if **Boy Comrades** are good singers, they may group around the basket, with locked arms, and conclude the play with a carol "Good King Wenceslas" would be appropriate, in key G, not A, unless the voices are trained.)

Carol: "Good King Wenceslas."

1.

Chorus—

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even:
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gathering winter fuel.

3.

Solo—

Bring me flesh, and bring me wine.
Bring me pine-logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither.

Chorus—

Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament;
And the bitter weather.

2.

Solo—

Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?

Solo—

Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain.

4.

Solo—

Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer.

Solo—

Mark my footsteps, my good page
Tread thou in them boldly:
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly.

5.

Chorus—

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod,
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

CURTAIN.